



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

No. CLII.

JULY, 1851.

ART. I.—*The Life and Correspondence of ROBERT SOUTHEY.* Edited by his Son, the REV. CHARLES CUTHBERT SOUTHEY, M. A. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1851. 8vo. pp. 579.

SOUTHEY's life is a good picture of the character and fortunes of the man of letters in our own age. He was the best representative of the class; he typified both the strength and the weakness, the pleasures and the pains, the tastes and the powers, of a man exclusively devoted to literary pursuits. He began to publish before he came of age, and he died almost with the pen still grasped in the fingers which had wielded it for half a century. He lived by his publications, which, though they gained him an honorable name, and have secured for him a permanent place in the history of English literature, afforded him a meagre and uncertain livelihood. He was rich in nothing but books, of which he had accumulated a larger store probably than any man in Great Britain not favored by hereditary wealth. The booksellers made him their dependant, but could not render him their slave; he was obliged to write for his bread, but he had not the spirit, or the want of spirit, of a Grub-street hack, ready to engage in any task that opened a chance of profit. Could he have stooped to this humiliation, he might, with his versatility of power and vast range of acquisition, speedily have become rich. He would do enough of such jobwork as writ-

ing for the Reviews and the Annual Registers to provide for the pressing wants of the moment, the immediate demands of himself and his family ; but he reserved his golden hours of toil for stately poems and histories, which the world was reluctant to purchase, and still more reluctant to read, but which still have substantial merits for the discerning few, so that they will probably float far down the stream of time before sinking into the mud at the bottom. Twelve months after its publication, he had received from the sale of *Madoc* less than four pounds sterling ; and the total subsequent profits hardly amounted to twenty-five pounds. Yet he was not daunted by this meagre return, nor rendered envious by the brilliant success of his contemporaries. Scott had already received £700 for the *Lay*, and was soon to obtain a thousand guineas for *Marmion*. Southey's poetry might have become almost equally popular, if he had chosen to follow the public taste instead of wasting his energies in a vain attempt to guide or create it ; for his acquisitions were even greater than those of his illustrious rival, and he had at least equal command of language and imagery, of sentiment and description. But he wrote poetry to please himself, not the public ; and hardly a year had elapsed after the launching of his unlucky Welsh epic, before he had two other long narrative poems on the stocks, both fashioned after his own wilful fancy, — *The Curse of Rehama* and *Roderic*. It is superfluous to say that he did not make his fortune by either of them. After the publication of the last, he seems at length to have convinced himself that he was too poor to publish any more epics ; or perhaps the booksellers formed this conclusion for him. But as if to show the ruling passion strong in death, he left an unfinished one in his desk, under the unpromising title of *Oliver Newman*, in which Philip of Mount Hope was to be a prominent character.

No literary man in our day can find his account in standing out against the judgment and taste of his contemporaries. Bacon and Milton, indeed, were willing to leave their fame "to men's charitable speeches, to foreign nations, and the next ages." But the world, in Bacon's and Milton's times, was not competent to sit upon their claims ; it has now become competent, as the number of readers has vastly increased, so that prejudice, intrigue, or caprice can no

longer sway the opinions of a majority of them. We are the posterity to which they appealed; and the justice now rendered to them is an assurance of equal justice to be meted out to those of our own generation. Then, a clique or a party at court, or at most a party in the metropolis, could settle for a time the rival claims both of poets and philosophers; for books were sealed mysteries to the bulk of the people. Now, the multitude form the tribunal; and as various prejudices and collateral influences offset and balance each other, just as discords are lost in a choir of thousands of voices singing in unison, the collected verdict, the resultant of many forces, is the judgment of truth and nature. Let him who hopes for an immortality of fame bow to their decision.

If Southey had been a discoverer of scientific or philosophical truth, he might justly have withstood the reigning taste that condemned his books, and called it ignorance or a caprice of fashion, which the saner feelings or clearer perceptions of a later age would set aside. But he was a poet, whose object it was to please, whose success consisted in pleasing; he addressed a world-wide audience; and if he did not move numbers, this very fact proved that the chords of the human heart were not responsive to his poetic touch. We have no doubt that the judgment of posterity upon the relative merits of his poetical works will be found to have been correctly indicated by their comparative rapidity of sale at the time of publication. One or two editions of *Thalaba* and *Roderic* were bought up by the public with reasonable speed; *Kehama* passed off more slowly, and *Madoc* only lumbered the bookseller's shelves. His ballads and eclogues, serious and comic, the hasty productions of his youth, were almost popular; some of them will outlive his epics by centuries, for they have already become household words.

Southey misjudged his own talents and the proper direction of them, because he led the life of a literary recluse, seldom leaving his quiet home by the Lakes to mingle with the world, and to have his opinions formed by attrition with those of the multitude. His notions could not be changed by argument, but he was very impressible by the magnetism of familiar intercourse. Whatever was nearest to him touched his heart too fondly to allow free scope for the action of his intellect.

At his own fireside, he was surrounded by a circle of women and children, to whom he was a most attached and indulgent parent, guide, playmate, and friend. They nursed his poetical vagaries by a constant tribute of affectionate praise. His love magnified the value of their judgments, while he could not conceive respect for the opinions of people whom he had never seen.

Intercourse with men is almost as necessary as familiarity with books, for the formation of a sound literary taste. If Southey had lived in the metropolis, or at Edinburgh, he would not so far have mistaken his vocation in literature. He was not a great thinker, not a great poet, not a great historian ; but he was, for his time, the greatest writer of English prose. His style is a perfect model of purity, transparency, and vigor, with just enough of ornament to make the reader's path a pleasant one, and with marvellous aptness and propriety of diction. The rhythm of his sentences is faultless, never lapsing into a Johnsonian stateliness and monotony of phrase, and never weakened by too frequent recurrence of studied musical cadences. The thought was sometimes languid and the reasoning feeble ; but the expression never. His manner, consequently, was best adapted to narration ; he was a capital story-teller, and the best of biographers. His *Life of Nelson*, which was a mere expansion, executed in a few weeks, of an article in the *Quarterly Review*, will last as long as the English language, and will perpetuate the fame of its hero more surely than his victories at the Nile and Trafalgar. The *Life of Wesley* is an unpromising subject, and is overlaid with theological extracts, designed only to illustrate the progress and extravagance of fanaticism ; but one may skim the book, omitting all the matter which is not from Southey's own pen, and he will find it a delightful biography. There is a love tale in the second and third volumes of *The Doctor*, which, though it has little incident and no pretension, merely from the charm of the diction and the exquisite sentiment that pervades it, is one of the most fascinating passages in English fiction. Yet we cannot wish that he had become a writer of romance. He had not the boundless wealth of invention, which heaped the pictured pages of Scott with a gorgeous profusion of scenes, characters, and incidents, such as never visited the imagination of

any other poet except Shakspeare. But Southey might have enriched our literature with a series of tales, combining the peculiarities of Mackenzie and Sterne, and far excelling both in simplicity, purity of feeling, and depth of pathos. He mistook his calling when he wrote so many epics and histories, and even when he speculated on the condition and prospects of society.

It is a great pity that the Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey undertook to write the life and edit the correspondence of his father. The biography is coldly written, what there is of it; for the fragments of narrative hardly fill up the numerous gaps that remain when we endeavor to piece out from the letters a connected view of the man's whole life and character. And even the collection of letters is imperfect; but few and brief extracts are given from those which were printed in the life of William Taylor, though the copyright of the latter book could not have prevented the editor of these volumes from reprinting them at length, as the ownership of letters must descend to the heirs of the writer of them. There were other letters of Southey already in print, particularly those contained in Cottle's *Reminiscences of Coleridge and Southey*, which we should have been glad to see again in their proper places in this work. Then the biographer is provokingly silent on those points of personal history, on which the curiosity of the public has been sufficiently excited and tantalized. Of what use was it to attempt to draw again the veil over the frailties of poor Coleridge, after Cottle and De Quincey had told so large a portion of the story? Further concealment or reserve is injustice to the memory of Southey, to whose honor it ought to be generally known, that at a time when he was as much a slave to the desk for his daily bread as was ever galley slave to his oar, Coleridge's deserted wife and children found a permanent and bountiful home beneath his roof. The wayward husband and father could then squander in voluptuous self-indulgence the bounty of his other friends without feeling any check from his violated domestic ties. Southey seems to have been almost the only friend who ventured to hold to him the language of truth and soberness in reproof of his reckless career.

It was strange that Southey should preserve the sunny, affectionate, and sanguine disposition that he manifested

throughout life, when there was so little in his first home that was likely to foster it. His early childhood was passed chiefly in the house of his mother's half-sister, Miss Tyler, who had been beautiful and praised for her understanding, but had become an eccentric and cross-tempered old maid. She made the boy's life miserable by her whims, by her capricious severity and indulgence, and did her best to stunt his intellect by a most injudicious choice of teachers and studies. She finally showed her affection for him, when he had nearly come of age, by literally turning him out of doors late in a stormy night, and refusing ever to see him again, because the young enthusiast had become involved in his wild scheme of Pantisocracy, and had contracted an imprudent marriage engagement. His cheerful and elastic temperament had borne the numberless outbreaks of her wayward humor in his childhood, and was not broken by this rude blow, though he had just before been compelled to leave college, and was now penniless and in love. He writes in riotous spirits to a younger brother immediately after this disaster, and continued to scribble verses, of which he had already a countless stock on hand. His Pantisocratic dream had no sooner faded away, than his brain was filled with other visions, equally baseless, of fortune and fame to be achieved by his poetry. Successive disappointments in this respect did not cause him to abandon hope; repeated calls upon his charity, when he was really too poor to support himself, did not weary his benevolence. One of his earliest successful publications was an edition of Chatterton's works, undertaken solely for the benefit of the poet's surviving sister. The following are extracts from letters written when his circumstances were more prosperous, though the year's income was still dependent upon the year's exertions, and was barely sufficient for his wants.

"Do you remember that twenty years ago a letter, directed for me at your house, was carried to a paper-hanger of my name in Bedford Street, and the man found me out, and put his card into my hand? Upon the strength of this acquaintance, I have now a letter from this poor namesake, soliciting charity, and describing himself and his family as in the very depths of human misery. This is not the only proof I have had of a strange opinion that I am overflowing with riches. Poor wretched man,

what can I do for him! However, I do not like to shut my ears and my heart to a tale of this kind. Send him, I pray you, a two-pound note in my name, to No. 10 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth; your servant had better take it, for fear he should have been sent to the work-house before this time. When I come to town, I will seek about if any thing can be done for him." p. 347.

"I must trespass on you further, and request that you will seal up ten pounds, and leave it with Rickman, directed for Charles Lamb, Esq., from R. S. It is for poor John Morgan, whom you may remember some twenty years ago. This poor fellow, whom I knew at school, and whose mother has sometimes asked me to her table when I should otherwise have gone without a dinner, was left with a fair fortune, from £10,000 to £15,000, and without any vice or extravagance of his own he has lost the whole of it. A stroke of the palsy has utterly disabled him from doing any thing to maintain himself; his wife, a good-natured, kind-hearted woman, whom I knew in her bloom, beauty, and prosperity, has accepted a situation as mistress of a charity-school, with a miserable salary of £40 a year, and this is all they have. In this pitiable case, Lamb and I have promised him ten pounds a year each as long as he lives. I have got five pounds a year for him from an excellent fellow, whom you do not know, and who chooses on this occasion to be called A. B., and I have written to his Bristol friends, who are able to do more for him than we are, and on whom he has stronger personal claims, so that I hope we shall secure him the decencies of life. You will understand that this is an *explanation* to you, not an *application*. In a case of this kind, contributions become a matter of feeling and duty among those who know the party, but strangers are not to be looked to." p. 378.

Perhaps from the very fact that Southey found so few to love in his early home, his affections entwined themselves more readily about those with whom he was afterwards thrown in contact. "I have a trick," he writes, "of thinking too well of those I love—better than they generally deserve, and better than my cold and containing manners ever let them know. The foibles of a friend always endear him, if they have coëxisted with my knowledge of him." Two of his schoolfellows, Mr. Bedford and Mr. Wynn, were his active friends through life; and though they met but seldom after they left school, they continued for forty years a frequent interchange of letters written with the frank affec-

tionateness and playfulness of boys who had recently quitted a common home. To the latter of them Southey was indebted for an annual allowance of £160 up to the time when the grant of a modest pension from the crown, made in consideration of the literary fame he had already achieved, enabled him to do without this friendly aid. The net proceeds of the pension were about equal to the annuity that he surrendered; and this small sum, together with the Laureateship, to which he succeeded in 1813, and which produced less than a hundred pounds a year, was all that he received, in addition to the fruits of his literary labor, till near the close of his life. Then, indeed, when the hand and the brain gave sad proof that they had long been overworked, the government added enough to his pension to free the evening of his days from pecuniary anxieties. Ever mindful of the prospective, as well as the immediate, wants of others, he had long devoted nearly half of his fixed income to the annual payments for a life insurance, which gave £4,000 to his family after his death. His books, also, of which he had accumulated over 14,000, many of them being rare and curious works, added probably an equal sum to this patrimony of his children.

What encouragement he received in early life for adopting literary pursuits as a means of livelihood, may be seen from the following extract from a letter, written eight years after the period to which it refers.

“When Joan of Arc was in the press, I had as many legitimate causes for unhappiness as any man need have—uncertainty for the future, and immediate want, in the literal and plain meaning of the word. I often walked the streets at dinner-time for want of a dinner, when I had not eighteen pence for the ordinary, nor bread and cheese at my lodgings. But do not suppose that I thought of my dinner when I was walking—my head was full of what I was composing. When I lay down at night, I was planning my poem; and when I rose up in the morning, the poem was the first thought to which I was awake. The scanty profits of that poem I was then anticipating in my lodging-house bills for tea, bread and butter, and those little &cs., which amount to a formidable sum when a man has no resources; but that poem, faulty as it is, has given me a Baxter’s shove into my right place in the world.” p. 160.

And this was the experience of a youth of twenty-one.

Only a very hopeful temperament and an inextinguishable love of letters could have bound him to a profession thus hedged round with difficulties and hardships. He was not compelled to select it for his mode of life. His uncle wished to educate him for the church, for which he seemed fitted by entire purity of conduct and purpose, and by what was afterwards proved to be a sincerely religious turn of mind. But his views of life as yet were too airy and fanciful to suit the sacred calling; and his doctrinal opinions, though quite unsettled, did not conform to the standard of the English church, while he was too sincere to tamper with them in order to promote his temporal interests. Even as late as 1812, he says in a letter, "it would be impossible for me to subscribe to the Church Articles; upon the mysterious points I rather withhold assent than refuse it, not presuming to define in my own imperfect conceptions what has been left indefinite." The law, also, was open to him as a profession, and his uncle urged him to pursue it after he had rejected divinity. Affection for this excellent relative induced him to comply far enough to keep two or three terms at one of the inns of court. But he could not bend his nature to what was originally distasteful to him. He could read law, but could not remember or digest it; so he threw Coke and Blackstone aside, and went to live in a cottage, where he could write epics by the ton, dream of literary fame, and support himself by drudging for Reviews and the newspapers. He was born with the *cacoethes scribendi*; and a year's residence in Portugal, whither his uncle invited him in the hope that a change of climate might stay the disease, only proved that it was ingrained in the constitution. No man ever labored more diligently in his calling, for the forty-five years during which he devoted to it his strength, and found in it his happiness. A list of his publications gives the titles of about ninety articles, most of them long and elaborate, contributed to the Quarterly, and more than half as many published in the Annual and the Foreign Quarterly Reviews. Then comes the catalogue of forty-five distinct publications of his own, (three of them posthumous,) filling over one hundred volumes. For thirteen of these works, however, he performed only editorial labor. All may be arranged under the several heads of poetry, history, biography, travels, essays on the politics

of the country, and miscellanies. Perhaps a third of the whole number were labors of love; the rest was task work.

If these had all been works of the imagination, whether poems or prose fictions, so that they could have been prepared with little reference to books, their amount would not have furnished so much cause for wonder. An ordinary lifetime, during which but a small portion of every day is devoted to the desk with unvarying assiduity, suffices for the creation of many volumes. Scott's poems and novels are cases in point; they were mostly written before breakfast, or in odd hours during the day, so that the members of his own household seldom had cause to believe that he was giving much time to the pen. But many of Southey's publications were works of learning, that required extensive and careful research. They did not lead him over classical ground; he was not a *scholar*, in the technical English meaning of that word. He could not even be called a hard student of any one subject. But he was a devourer of books, especially of old and curious ones, whence he could glean fragments of obscure history and general illustrations of literature. He spent a larger portion of his meagre income than he could reasonably afford in purchasing them; his other wants were stinted to obtain money for this darling purpose; and he watched with all the glee of a schoolboy in mischief the process of unpacking a large case of these newly acquired treasures as soon as they reached his home.

"You would rejoice with me were you now at Keswick, at the tidings that a box of books is safely harbored in the Mersey, so that for the next fortnight I shall be more interested in the news of Fletcher* than of Bonaparte. It contains some duplicates of the lost cargo; among them, the collection of the oldest Spanish poems, in which is a metrical romance upon the Cid. I shall sometimes want you for a Gothic etymology. Talk of the happiness of getting a great prize in the lottery! What is that to the opening a box of books! The joy upon lifting up the cover must be something like what we shall feel when Peter the Porter opens the door up stairs, and says, Please to walk in, sir. That I shall never be paid for my labor according to the current value of time and labor, is tolerably certain; but if any one should offer me £10,000 to forego that labor, I should bid him

* The name of a Keswick carrier.

and his money go to the devil, for twice the sum could not purchase me half the enjoyment. It will be a great delight to me in the next world to take a fly and visit these old worthies, who are my only society here, and to tell them what excellent company I found them here at the lakes of Cumberland two centuries after they had been dead and turned to dust. In plain truth, I exist more among the dead than the living, and think more about them, and, perhaps, feel more about them." p. 176.

The following is his own humorous account of his inability to resist temptation of this sort, as it was shown during a visit to Scotland shortly after the birth of his daughter Edith.

"Having had neither new coat nor hat since the Edithling was born, you may suppose I was in want of both ; so at Edinburgh I was to rig myself, and, moreover, lay in new boots and pantaloons. Howbeit, on considering the really respectable appearance which my old ones made for a traveller, and considering, moreover, that as learning was better than house or land, it certainly must be much better than fine clothes, I laid out all my money in books, and came home to wear out my old wardrobe in the winter. My library has had many additions since you left me, and many gentlemen in parchment remain with anonymous backs till you come and bedeck them." pp. 196, 197.

His books were not purchased as mere curiosities, or to be stored away with a dim belief that they might at some future time come into use. With every volume on the shelves of his great library, which occupied the sides of nearly every room in his house, he was familiar ; and most of them he had directly laid under contribution, in one way or another, for the furtherance of his literary projects. He was a very rapid reader, and enjoyed in great perfection that faculty of which most persons who have lived much among books have some share, — the power of skimming a volume with great quickness, and alighting as it were by instinct upon every passage in it which is interesting or suited to the purpose in hand. His acquisition of languages was not remarkable. He had a critical knowledge of Spanish and Portuguese, acquired by residence in the countries where they were spoken, and by long study of the literature of the peninsula. Latin and the other modern languages of Latin origin he read with facility ; but he had only a smattering of the German and the Anglo Saxon. The wide range of allusion and quotation in many of his works, especially in *The Doctor*, large portions of which

are a farrago of citations, has excited much wonder, but is explained, or rendered less marvellous, by the account here given of his habits of study. He always read with a purpose of storing up for immediate or future possible use whatever seemed noteworthy or curious in the volume. The passages which he considered fit for preservation were noted by a pencil mark in the margin, and subsequently copied out by members of his family, and arranged by a convenient system of classification. A tenacious memory also served him as a clew through the labyrinth of materials thus accumulated. Thus, on whatever subject he began to write, he had great stores of illustrative matter at hand. The whole process, when thus largely carried out, savors too strongly of the book-makers' art, and seems hardly becoming to the true scholar. He was partly driven to it by the necessity which always binds the man who writes for his bread ; but his natural taste for discursive reading and for preserving the curiosities of literature prevented the employment from seeming burdensome to him.

Of course, great economy and a systematic application of time were needed for the execution of literary projects so numerous and extensive. Most persons condemned to such a course of life would soon lose whatever native strength and elasticity of mind they might originally have possessed, and would become, even in their own eyes, mere literary drudges. But Southey's buoyancy of spirits and richness of fancy guarded him against this evil. To use an expressive phrase, he put so much heart into his work that it never became wearisome. He needed no other relaxation than a change of the subject of employment, with which he was always supplied. The whole day that was not given to visitors was divided among his various tasks, just enough being reserved for exercise and sleep to keep the bodily frame in a healthy condition. Here is a picture of the ordinary routine of a day's labor.

"A more thoroughly domestic man, or one more simple in his mode of living, it would be difficult to picture ; and the habits into which he settled himself about this time continued through life, unbroken regularity and unwearied industry being their chief characteristics. Habitually an early riser, he never encroached upon the hours of the night ; and finding his highest pleasure and

his recreation in the very pursuits necessary for earning his daily bread, he was, probably, more continually employed than any other writer of his generation. ‘My actions,’ he writes about this time to a friend, ‘are as regular as those of St. Dunstan’s quarter-boys. Three pages of history after breakfast, (equivalent to five in small quarto printing;) then to transcribe and copy for the press, or to make my selections and biographies, or what else suits my humor, till dinner-time; from dinner to tea I read, write letters, see the newspaper, and very often indulge in a siesta — for sleep agrees with me, and I have a good, substantial theory to prove that it must; for as a man who walks much requires to sit down and rest himself, so does the brain, if it be the part most worked, require its repose. Well, after tea I go to poetry, and correct, and re-write, and copy till I am tired, and then turn to any thing else till supper; and this is my life — which, if it be not a very merry one, is yet as happy as heart could wish. At least, I should think so if I had not once been happier; and I do think so, except when that recollection comes upon me. And then, when I cease to be cheerful, it is only to become contemplative — to feel at times a wish that I was in that state of existence which passes not away; and this always ends in a new impulse to proceed, that I may leave some durable monument and some efficient good behind me.” p. 199.

The following gives some idea of the variety of occupation with which he was constantly provided.

“But I have not been absolutely idle, only comparatively so. I have made ready about five sheets of the Peninsular War for the press, (the main part, indeed, was transcription,) and William Nicol will have it as soon as the chapter is finished. I have written an account of Derwent Water for Westall’s Views of the Lakes. I have begun the Book of the Church, written half a dialogue between myself and Sir Thomas More, composed seventy lines for Oliver Newman, opened a Book of Collections for the Moral and Literary History of England, and sent to Longman for materials for the Life of George Fox and the Origin and Progress of Quakerism, a work which will be quite as curious as the Wesley, and about half the length. Make allowances for letter writing, (which consumes far too great a portion of my time,) and for the interruptions of the season, and this account of the month will not be so bad as to subject me to any very severe censure of my stewardship.” p. 390.

Though Southey’s spirits never flagged from the constant pressure of his literary avocations and the never ending demands upon his time and intellect, there were times when he

cast a saddened and anxious glance into the future for himself and his family. The following, which is taken from a letter to a friend, written in 1818, is in a far more desponding tone than was usual with him. He had prefaced it by saying, "that though some persons, whose knowledge of me is scarcely skin deep, suppose I have no nerves, because I have great self-control so far as regards the surface, if it were not for great self-management, and what may be called a strict intellectual regimen, I should very soon be in a deplorable state of what is called nervous disease ; and this would have been the case any time during the last twenty years." His intellectual regimen, it is true, was good ; but he was less indebted to it than to the happy frame of spirits with which he was endowed by nature, for his ordinary freedom from depression and anxiety.

"I want now to provide against that inability which may any day or any moment overtake me. You are not mistaken in thinking that the last three years have considerably changed me ; the outside remains pretty much the same, but it is far otherwise within. If hitherto the day has been sufficient for the labor, as well as the labor for the day, I now feel that it can not always, and possibly may not long be so. Were I dead, there would be a provision for my family, which, though not such as I yet hope to make it, would yet be a respectable one. But if I were unable to work, half my ways and means would instantly be cut off, and the whole of them are needed. Such thoughts did not use to visit me. My spirits retain their strength, but they have lost their buoyancy, and that forever. I should be the better for travelling, but that is not in my power. At present, the press fetters me, and if it did not, I could not afford to be spending money when I ought to be earning it. But I shall work the harder to enable me so to do." p. 370.

His friends were numerous and active ; and not unfrequently he had hopes of obtaining some situation which would relieve him from all enforced exercise of the pen, and from constant dependence on the favor of the public, which, at the best, never shone warmly on his labors. But one accident after another defeated every project of this sort. There was an intrinsic difficulty in finding a post which would answer his wants, and not conflict with his long established tastes and habits. He was chivalrously independent in his feelings and opinions ; he would not purchase immunity from care by the

smallest sacrifice of his intellectual or moral integrity. Mere dignity of office he did not prize; he would have been as content as his friend Wordsworth was, to owe his livelihood for many years to so petty an office as that of Commissioner or Distributor of Stamps. But while thus employed, had he received such an intimation from head-quarters, as Wordsworth did, "requiring him to employ persons to purchase soda powders when sold without a stamp, and then lay an information against the vendors," he would instantly have resigned his office in disgust. The author of the *Excursion* probably evaded the difficulty by paying no heed to the order. "It seems," wrote Southey, "as if they were resolved so to reduce the emolument in the public services, and connect such services with them, that no one with the habits and feelings of a gentleman shall enter or continue in office."

It was not easy to find employment in government's salaried corps for one thus nice in feeling and peculiar in his tastes. Early in life, when his fortunes were at the lowest ebb, he was appointed private secretary to an Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, an office of little or no labor, which gave him £300 a year, and opened a fair prospect of something better. But he resigned it in less than a twelvemonth, either because he scrupled to receive pay without work, or because the Chancellor, thinking his secretary had nothing else to do, asked him to become tutor to his children. Subsequently, he had a hope of being appointed steward to the Derwentwater estates, which belonged to Greenwich Hospital, an office more than twice as lucrative as the one just mentioned; but after spending some time and effort in solicitation, he ascertained that the duties of the office were of a practical nature, which would task the powers and absorb most of the time of one educated to business; and he immediately withdrew his pretensions. When Fox came into power for the last time, he expressed a willingness to provide for him. "There were two things in Portugal," wrote Southey, "which I could hold, — the consulship, or the secretaryship of legation. The former was twice given away; but that, Fox said, was too good a thing for me; the latter he promised if an opportunity occurred of promoting Lord Strangford, and that never took place." Lastly, the poet hoped to be appointed Royal Historiographer for England, an office then held by

poor old Dutens, with a salary of £400 a year; and there was something like an engagement by the ministry that he should have it on the decease of the present incumbent. Dutens died, and the title was given in hot haste to J. S. Clarke, librarian to the Prince Regent, and author, we believe, of a ponderous *Life of Nelson*, which will be read when Southey's is forgotten, but not before. The fates seem to have decreed that the author of *Thalaba* should not become a placeman. To prevent misapprehension, it should be stated, that these applications for office, if such they may be called, were scattered over a long period of years, and that most of them were rather made by Southey's friends than by Southey himself. Foremost among these generous sympathizers with his position and his claims was Walter Scott, who never wasted an opportunity for an act of kindness to a literary brother, and to whom Southey was finally indebted for the Laureateship.

Since Queen Anne's time, when literary taste and patronage were fashionable at court, the English government has turned a very deaf ear to the claims of literature and science for encouragement from the state. Yet the examples of France and some of the powers of Germany, often wisely liberal in this respect, have not been wholly lost upon a few British statesmen. Fox, Canning, and Brougham more frequently lacked opportunity than willingness to throw a few crumbs from the official table to the poorer members of a profession to which they were themselves indebted for a portion of their honors. But the aristocratic structure of English society and politics gives a vast preponderance to the claims of family or hereditary privilege; while the personal tastes of the last half a dozen sovereigns who have occupied the British throne have not fostered the aristocracy of intellect with even a hope of royal favor. Projects have been started which indicate a consciousness that this state of things is not honorable to the English nation; but as they have mostly come from the parties who were to be benefited by them, or from those who were suspected of wishing to enhance their political honors by their literary pretensions, they have all resulted in failure. There is a curious correspondence in this work between Brougham and Southey, when the former was Lord Chancellor, and wished to indicate, even if he did not really feel, a

disposition to patronize literary merit. He showed frankness, if not magnanimity, in asking Southey's advice upon the subject, as they had long held opposite views in politics, and neither had spared the other when occasion served. The time when this correspondence took place was not a favorable one for smoothing over old political dissensions ; for the Reform Bill was in agitation, and even the throne tottered while that storm blew. Southey either felt more strongly than his lordship, or was not so able to disguise his feelings ; for he answered Brougham's very civil letter more gruffly than he was wont to write to any one. He tells him plainly, that the administration to which he belonged "have raised the devil who is now raging through the land, and it is their business to lay him if they can." He added, what was probably true, that the government could not have leisure then to attend to such a project ; for "the time seems not far distant when the cares of war and expenditure will come upon it once more with their all engrossing importance."

"But when better times shall arrive, (whoever may live to see them,) it will be worthy the consideration of any government whether the institution of an Academy, with salaries for its members (in the nature of literary or lay benefices) might not be the means of retaining in *its* interests, as connected with their own, a certain number of influential men of letters, who should hold those benefices, and a much greater number of aspirants who would look to them in their turn. A yearly grant of £10,000 would endow ten such appointments of £500 each for the elder class, and twenty-five of £200 each for younger men ; these latter eligible of course, and preferably, but not necessarily, to be elected to the higher benefices as those fell vacant, and as they should have approved themselves." p. 498.

He states briefly and strongly his reason for believing that letters would gain by more avowed and active encouragement from the state.

"There are literary works of national importance which can only be performed by coöperative labor, and will never be undertaken by that spirit of trade which at present preponderates in literature. The formation of an English Etymological Dictionary is one of those works ; others might be mentioned ; and in this way, literature might gain much by receiving national encouragement ; but government would gain a great deal more by bestowing it. Revolutionary governments understand this ; I should

be glad if I could believe that our legitimate one would learn it before it is too late. I am addressing one who is a statesman as well as a man of letters, and who is well aware that the time is come in which governments can no more stand without pens to support them than without bayonets. They must soon know, if they do not already know it, that the volunteers as well as the mercenaries of both professions, who are not already enlisted in this service, will enlist themselves against it; and I am afraid they have a better hold on the soldier than upon the penman, because the former has, in the spirit of his profession and in the sense of military honor, something which not unfrequently supplies the want of any higher principle, and I know not that any substitute is to be found among the gentlemen of the press.

“But neediness, my lord, makes men dangerous members of society, quite as often as affluence makes them worthless ones. I am of opinion that many persons who become bad subjects because they are necessitous, because ‘the world is not their friend, nor the world’s law,’ might be kept virtuous (or, at least, withheld from mischief) by being made happy, by early encouragement, by holding out to them a reasonable hope of obtaining in good time, an honorable station and a competent income, as the reward of literary pursuits, when followed with ability and diligence, and recommended by good conduct.” p. 498.

The Whig Lord Chancellor, who had written most of the virulent political articles in the *Edinburgh Review*, probably did not think that this was encouragement enough for him to persevere in the design; as we hear of no attempt to carry it into execution.

There are two beautiful letters from Sir Robert Peel to Southey, written during the short period of the former’s control of the government in 1835, and when the latter was beginning to sink under the effects of literary toil too intense and long continued, while the future, as his family was imperfectly provided for, seemed darkening before him. In the first, Sir Robert offers him a baronetcy, as a public tribute of honor due to “a name the most eminent in literature, and which has claims to respect and honor which literature alone can never confer.” In the second, marked *private*, anticipating that the baronetcy would be declined, as it was, on the ground of a want of pecuniary means to sustain the dignity of advanced rank, the writer asks,—“Will you tell me, without reserve, whether the possession of power puts within my reach the means of doing any thing which can be service-

able or acceptable to you, and whether you will allow me to find some compensation for the many heavy sacrifices which office imposes upon me in the opportunity of marking my gratitude as a public man for the eminent services you have rendered, not only to literature, but to the higher interests of virtue and religion?" Nothing could be more kindly or delicately offered. Southey gave in answer a frank and exact statement of his circumstances, and on the ground only of a failure of his health, and recent severe affliction in his family, (his wife had become insane,) from which causes he could no longer feel sure of his own power to continue his literary exertions, he asked for a moderate increase of his pension. The request was granted as soon as made; and the poet was thus enabled to look forward with fortitude to the sad calamity which soon befell him, — the lapse of his overtaxed faculties into imbecility.

In one of his letters, Southey alludes with some humor to the general misconception as to the extent of his means and influence, so that his patronage was sought as something which would insure a young author's fortune in the world. Because he had obtained high literary reputation, while he was intimate with many persons of rank and fame, and held political opinions which, in the main, were those of the government, and which he often strenuously defended with the pen and with an air of authority, it was almost universally taken for granted that his fortune and influence were commensurate with his claims. With a knowledge of the mere external circumstances of his position, no one would have supposed that he was still a needy dependent on the booksellers and popular favor. The benevolence of his character favored the mistake. He had befriended Chatterton's sister, Henry Kirke White, Herbert Knowles, Jones the footman poet, and many others, as warmly and efficiently as if his rank and wealth amply seconded his desire to do good. The world did not know that he really needed the aid which was so frequently asked of him, and the applications for which became at last so numerous and pressing, that, in a half humorous peroration to his account of John Jones and other uneducated poets, he was obliged to declare his inability to entertain any more of them.

He was, perhaps, too ready a patron of unfledged and

needy authors; the native kindliness of his heart overruled the critical severity of his judgment. Yet he could give judicious and restraining advice when the hopes of youthful or untried mediocrity were too far excited. He would draw a dark picture of the results of literary perseverance, and still proffer his guiding hand, and perhaps more substantial aid, if the applicant could not be thus taught prudence. Once he received as a bequest the literary papers of a suicide, who had destroyed himself under the misery occasioned by unbelief in religion, though the insane desire for posthumous notoriety had led him to take steps for securing the publication of his remains under the editorial care of a renowned poet. Before the fatal act, he had written anonymous letters to Southey, in which his awful purpose was darkly intimated, and had received from him earnest religious advice, expressed in the most judicious and eloquent terms. Another of these anonymous applications came from a lady, in whose letter was something which moved Southey's kind heart even to painful emotion, and he answered her with much feeling. We have room only for a portion of his beautiful reply.

"You tell me that the whole of your happiness is dependent upon literary pursuits and recreations. It is well that you have these resources; but, were we near each other, and were I to like you half as well upon a nearer acquaintance as it appears to me at this distance that I should do, I think that, when I had won your confidence, I should venture to tell you that something better than literature is necessary for happiness.

"To confess the truth, one of the causes which have prevented me from writing to you earlier has been the wish and half intention of touching upon this theme, checked by that sort of hesitation which sometimes (and that too often) prevents us from doing what we ought for fear of singularity. That you are a woman of talents I know; and I think you would not have given me the preference over more fashionable poets, if there had not been something in the general character of my writings which accorded with your feelings, and which you did not find in theirs. But you have lived in high life; you move in circles of gayety and fashion; and though you sympathize with me when I express myself in verse, it is more than probable that the direct mention of religion may startle you, as something unwarranted as well as unexpected.

"I am no Methodist, no sectarian, no bigot, no formalist. My natural spirits are buoyant beyond those of any person, man,

woman, or child, whom I ever saw or heard of. They have had enough to try them and to sink them, and it is by religion alone that I shall be enabled to pass the remainder of my days in cheerfulness and in hope. Without hope there can be no happiness, and without religion, no hope but such as deceives us. Your heart seems to want an object, and this would satisfy it; and if it has been wounded, this, and this only, is the cure.

“Are you displeased with this freedom? Or do you receive it as a proof that I am disposed to become something more than a mere literary acquaintance, and that you have made me feel an interest concerning you which an ordinary person could not have excited?” p. 374.

In no respect has Southey been so much misjudged, or so hardly dealt by, as in relation to his political opinions, and the change which took place in them just after he had arrived at manhood. He has been held up to odium as a renegade and a bigot, an opponent of all social and political reforms, a harsh and bitter Tory in all his views of church and state. If it be not so much the opinions which a man holds, as the manner in which he holds them, which entitles him to praise or censure, this representation is certainly the opposite of the truth. Persons may differ in their views of the soundness of his judgment, and the largeness of his information. But no man surpassed him in independence of opinion and benevolence of motive; no one avowed his political and religious creed with greater frankness or more fulness of belief. True, he felt deeply, and expressed himself warmly, on such topics; for he had the welfare of his countrymen and the higher interests of society much at heart. He was dogmatic also, as every earnest and frank person needs must be, if he do not keep perpetual watch over his tongue and his pen. He resembled Dr. Arnold in the keenness of his reprehension of what seemed to him heterodox or mischievous in the opinions or conduct of other men. This trait, as he explained it to a friend who had complained of its appearance in some of his compositions, proceeded from “that confidence which a man feels whose opinions are established upon his religious belief, and who looks to the moral consequences in every thing, and will no more admit of any measures which oppose that belief, or lead to consequences injurious to it, than a mathematician will listen to any thing that contradicts an axiom, or a logician to a train of reasoning which starts from

a false postulate." Thus, when Lord Byron had begun to publish his *Don Juan*, and was coöperating with Leigh Hunt and Shelley in the publication of *The Liberal*, which openly assailed the government and religion of England, Southey went out of his way to attack him with a vehemence of phrase which savored of ferocity, and affixed to him and his compeers the designation, which they have not yet lost, of the "Satanic school." Byron replied with quite as much bitterness and more wit; and when Southey rejoined, in a letter to the *Morning Courier*, with more keenness than ever, Byron sent him a challenge, which his friend, Douglas Kinnaird, however, was prudent enough to keep in his pocket.

If Southey's warmth was sometimes betrayed on a less fitting occasion than this, it was the fault of his temperament. With him, emotion often forestalled judgment. If this fervor had appeared only on occasions of personal irritation, or had ever shown itself in personal intercourse, as it did in his writings, he might have been called an ill-tempered man. But it all evaporated on paper; and it was even more apparent when his benevolence or his sympathies were appealed to, than when he conceived his own rights to be invaded. Still, his judgment was defective, for though he saw clearly what came within the range of his vision, he did not look far enough. His friend, Henry Taylor, told him frankly, that he was too apt "to state a strong reason as a conclusive one"—that he did not weigh objections—that he was not inquisitive as to the defects of what, on the whole, he saw cause to approve—that he was "very far from what is called, in official phrase, a safe man." Taylor was right; Southey was not "a safe man," and we like him the better for it. He often jumped before he had calculated the breadth of the ditch. It was not wonderful, then, that while he always had the same ends in view, while he was constantly looking to the improvement of society, to its social, moral, and religious advancement, he should adopt at different times different plans for accomplishing these ends. He was not consistent as a politician, but he was consistent as a philanthropist.

His opinions on practical subjects were often unsound, because he was a recluse man of letters, of an imaginative and enthusiastic temperament, prone to form abstract conclusions with an insufficient basis of facts. He began his career of au-

thorship when he was a mere boy, and was thus led to publish some of the immature fancies which many entertain in their early years, but which they subsequently correct by the light of experience; and as these have not been put on record, they are soon forgotten. A change came over his mind, and he was held answerable for it as for a vacillation of purpose, when not his purpose, but his selection of means, had been altered, and when many others were in the same category with himself, though they escaped censure because the several stages of their mental growth had not been chronicled. Before he attained his majority, he was a republican and a Pantisocratist, eager to establish a new society on some impracticable plan in the wilds of America, which should be free from poverty, oppression, inequality, and the many other evils with which men were afflicted in the Old World. It was no discredit to the mere boy to entertain such views; it was no discredit to the man that he soon abandoned them, and sought to remedy social and political evils by other means. He became a student, a man of wide and multifarious learning, and thus naturally fell in love with the storied and venerable Past, rich with the wisdom of centuries. Institutions gray with years became hallowed in his eyes, and he looked forward with a shudder to any convulsion which might destroy, though he eagerly adopted any project intended to amend, them. His biographer sums up the various schemes of social improvement that he proposed and defended, and they are surely numerous enough to vindicate him from the charge of a blind conservatism.

“Among the various measures and changes he advocated may be named the following, many of which were topics he handled at greater or less length in the *Quarterly Review*, while his opinions upon the others may be found scattered throughout his letters: National education to be assisted by government grants. The diffusion of cheap literature of a wholesome and harmless kind. The necessity of an extensive and well-organized system of colonization, and especially of encouraging female emigration. The importance of a wholesome training for the immense number of children in London and other large towns, who, without it, are abandoned to vice and misery. The establishment of Protestant sisters of charity, and of a better order of hospital nurses. The establishment of savings’ banks in all the small towns throughout the country. The abolishment of flogging in

the army and navy, except in cases flagrantly atrocious. Alterations in the poor laws. Alterations in the game laws * Alterations in the criminal laws, as inflicting the punishment of death in far too many cases. Alterations in the factory system, for the benefit of the operative, and especially as related to the employment of children. The desirableness of undertaking national works, reproductive ones if possible, in times of peculiar distress.† The necessity of doing away with interments in crowded cities. The system of giving allotments of ground to laborers; the employment of paupers in cultivating waste lands. The commutation of tithes; and, lastly, the necessity for more clergymen, more colleges, more courts of law." p. 380.

We copy also from one of his letters a brief indication of his views respecting what may justly be termed the great plague-spot in the social condition of England.

"The evil which I wish to see remedied is the aggregation of landed property, which gives to such a man as — the command of whole counties, and enables such men as — to sing 'we are seven,' like Wordsworth's little girl, into the ear of a minister, and demand for himself situations which he is unfit for. This is a worse evil than that which our mortmain statutes were enacted to remedy, for it is gradually rooting out the yeomanry of the country, and dwindling the gentry into complete political insignificance. It is not parliamentary reform which can touch this evil; some further limitation of entail, or a proper scheme of income taxation, might." p. 273.

His own view of the alteration in his opinions is a fair and reasonable one. Writing in 1814, he says, "I was a republican, and I should be so still, if I thought we were advanced enough in civilization for such a form of society." He was a radical at a time when "those who were deemed republicans were exposed to personal danger from the populace; and when a spirit of anti-Jacobinism prevailed which I cannot characterize better than by saying that it was as blind and as intolerant as the Jacobinism of the present day." He was a Jacobin when the bright promise of the opening scenes of the first French Revolution had filled the minds of all impulsive and enthusiastic persons with glowing visions of a

* The changes he advocated in the game laws have long since taken place, but, alas! without the good effects anticipated from them.

† Such as of later years has occurred in Ireland and Scotland.

new era, another reign of Saturn, in the history of mankind; and he became a Conservative, even a violent Tory, when the Saturnalia of Jacobinism that ensued were sternly repressed by the iron despotism of Napoleon.

“Time, you say, moderates opinions as it mellows wine. My views and hopes are certainly altered, though the heart and soul of my wishes continue the same. It is the world that has changed, not I. I took the same way in the afternoon that I did in the morning, but sunset and sunrise make a different scene. If I regret any thing in my own life, it is that I *could* not take orders, for of all ways of life that would have best accorded with my nature; but I could not get in at the door.” p. 204.

Southey was known as a frequent contributor to the *Quarterly Review*, and was therefore generally held responsible for the bitterness, injustice, and bigotry with which that noted periodical, while it was under Gifford's management, was justly charged. The accusation was baseless. He had no voice in the management of the *Review*, he complained bitterly of the editorial liberties that were taken with his own articles, and he disapproved many things in the literary and political character of the work. The tone which Gifford adopted, or allowed his other contributors to adopt, towards America, was peculiarly offensive to him. The character of our first President inspired him with reverence; and he thought to pay a high compliment to the memory of the English Hampden, in one of his articles, by saying that “he might have left behind him *a name scarcely inferior to Washington's* ;” to his great disgust, old Gifford struck out this phrase, and substituted for it *a memorable name*. When the infamous review of *Inchiquin's* Letters appeared in the *Quarterly*, the authorship of it was generally attributed to Southey; and a pamphlet in reply to the article was written under this supposition in New York, and a copy of it forwarded to him, in order that he might see himself roundly abused. He only laughed at the blunder, and filed the pamphlet away among his curiosities of literature.

Still, the power of his pen in teaching conservative principles was generally acknowledged, and the most tempting offer in a pecuniary point of view that was ever made to him was when Mr. Walter, the proprietor of the *Times* newspaper, asked him to remove to London for the purpose of writing

the leading articles in that journal, with a salary of £2,000 a year and a share in the profits. Had he accepted it, he might have realized an independence in a few years. But he declined the offer without a moment's hesitation, on the ground that no emolument would tempt him to give up a country life and the literary pursuits to which he had been so long addicted. "Indeed, I should consider that portion of my time which is given up to temporary politics as grievously misspent, if the interests at stake were less important." The same feelings caused him to decline a more honorable, though probably less lucrative, situation that was tendered to him by the government; they wished him to come up to London for the purpose of conducting a new periodical, which was to be an organ of the views of the administration. Nothing could induce him to leave his beloved Keswick, or to abandon altogether the hopes he had so long cherished, of leaving permanent works behind him which should carry down his name and fame to future generations. In both these cases, also, his jealous independence of character took the alarm, lest he should be betrayed into a situation where he might be considered bound to advocate opinions and measures which he did not heartily approve. No man of letters ever had a greater horror of selling his pen for pecuniary gain.

It has been intimated that we think less highly of Southey as an author than as a man. Yet his narrative poems will long hold their place in English literature, though they will be seldom read; and the merits of his prose style will carry down a portion of his works, as family classics, to a much later period. It would be interesting to get at the secret, if we could, of that inimitable prose, in which the thought or image appears as the landscape does in a perfectly pure and bright atmosphere, with every outline sharply drawn, and without one hue or stain but that which belongs to it by nature. In reading other authors, we seem to look out through wavy and blurred glass, sometimes thickly crusted with dirt, or stained with gaudy hues that cast a false splendor over the scene. Southey's account of the formation of his style agrees entirely with this estimate of its merits. Better advice than this cannot be given to young writers.

"The rules for composition appear to me very simple; inasmuch as any style is peculiar, the peculiarity is a fault, and the

proof of this is the easiness with which it is imitated, or, in other words, caught. You forgive it in the original for its originality, and because originality is usually connected with power. Sallust and Tacitus are examples among the Latins, Sir T. Brown, Gibbon, and Johnson among our own authors ; but look at the imitations of Gibbon and Johnson ! My advice to a young writer is, that he should weigh well what he says, and not be anxious concerning *how* he says it ; that his first object should be to express his meaning as perspicuously, his second as briefly as he can, and in this every thing is included." p. 439, 440.

"As for composition, it has no difficulties for one who will 'read, learn, mark, and inwardly digest' the materials upon which he is to work. I do not mean to say that it is easy to write well ; but of this I am sure, that most men would write much better if they did not take half the pains they do. For myself, I consider it no compliment when any one praises the simplicity of my prose writings ; they are written, indeed, without any other immediate object than that of expressing what is to be said in the readiest and most perspicuous manner. But in the transcript, (if I make one,) and always in the proof-sheet, every sentence is then weighed upon the ear, euphony becomes a second object, and ambiguities are removed. But of what is called *style*, not a thought enters my head at any time. Look to the matter, and the manner takes care of itself." p. 490.

Southey applied the same precepts to the formation of style in poetry ; in this, we think, he was mistaken, and the mistake was the cause of the chief faults in his own poems, which are flatness and insipidity. In prose, if we may use technical terms, as the object is truth, the thought or subject is to be viewed *objectively*, or as it actually is, without any quality imparted to it from the mind of the spectator. But in poetry, pleasure is the chief end, and the matter is to be looked at *subjectively*, or as shaped and tinted by those emotions which the poet wishes to excite ; otherwise, rhyme and metre would be mere impertinences. The Lake Poets, as they were invidiously termed, when they aimed most at simplicity, produced only baby-talk. Both Southey and Wordsworth were wrong in theory, and right only by accident, or when most inconsistent with themselves. The former was a great master of rotund and majestic verse, when he chose to exert his powers. Take the following, for instance, which is from one of his earliest poems, and which he himself adduces as an example of fulness of phrase required by the subject.

“ It was a goodly sight
 To see the embattled pomp, as with the step
 Of stateliness the barbed steeds came on ;
 To see the pennons rolling their long waves
 Before the gale ; and banners broad and bright
 Tossing their blazonry ; and high-plumed chiefs,
 Vidames, and seneschals, and castellans,
 Gay with their bucklers’ gorgeous heraldry,
 And silken surcoats on the buoyant wind
 Billowing.”

p. 101.

There are not many sketches, in these letters, of Southey’s contemporaries, though we believe, from various indications, that he was very frank in stating his opinions about his intimate friends and public characters generally, that he was a shrewd judge of men, and very happy in his portraits of them. From the many omissions that are indicated, we suspect that the editor has used superfluous care in striking out what might have been the most interesting portions of the book. The following, which is taken from a letter written in 1804, shows that Southey understood Coleridge perfectly at a very early period.

“ You are in a great measure right about Coleridge ; he is worse in body than you seem to believe ; but the main cause lies in his own management of himself, or, rather, want of management. *His mind is in a perfect St. Vitus’s dance — eternal activity without action.* At times he feels mortified that he should have done so little ; but this feeling never produces any exertion. I will begin to-morrow, he says, and thus he has been all his life-long letting to-day slip. He has had no heavy calamities in life, and so contrives to be miserable about trifles. Poor fellow ! there is no one thing which gives me so much pain as the witnessing such a waste of unequalled power. I knew one man resembling him, save that with equal genius he was actually a vicious man.”
 “ A few individuals only remember him with a sort of horror and affection, which just serves to make them melancholy whenever they think of him or mention his name. This will not be the case with Coleridge ; the *dissecta membra* will be found, if he does not die early ; but having so much to do, so many errors to weed out of the world which he is capable of eradicating, if he does die without doing his work, it would half break my heart, for no human being has had more talents allotted.” p. 177.

Here, also, is an amusing sketch of Wilberforce, for the

earnestness of whose evangelical sentiments, it should be understood, the writer had little sympathy.

“Wilberforce, also, has been here with all his household, and such a household ! The principle of the family seems to be that, provided the servants have faith, good works are not to be expected from them, and the utter disorder which prevails in consequence is truly farcical. The old coachman would figure upon the stage. Upon making some complaint about the horses, he told his master and mistress that, since they had been in this country, they had been so lake-and-river-and-mountain-and-valley-mad, that they had thought of nothing which they ought to think of. I have seen nothing in such pell-mell, topsy-turvy, and chaotic confusion as Wilberforce’s apartments since I used to see a certain breakfast-table in Skeleton Corner.* His wife sits in the midst of it like Patience on a monument, and he frisks about as if every vein in his body were filled with quicksilver ; but, withal, there is such a constant hilarity in every look and motion, such a sweetness in all his tones, such a benignity in all his thoughts, words, and actions, that all sense of his grotesque appearance is presently overcome, and you can feel nothing but love and admiration for a creature of so happy and blessed a nature.” p. 367.

The following is chiefly interesting as it shows how personal intimacy, or even a casual acquaintance, tended to soften the severe judgments which Southey was wont to pass on any delinquency in the conduct or writings of those whom he knew at first only by report. His affections instantly clung about those with whom he was thrown in contact, if there was nothing flagitious in their actions at the moment. If Shelley had not happened to come into his immediate neighborhood, the indignant bard of Keswick, looking only at his conduct and publications while in college, would have fitted up a niche for him in the lower regions hard by that into which he thrust the “Satanic school.” But this is a very good-natured account.

“Here is a man at Keswick, who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794. His name is Shelley, son to the member for Shoreham ; with £6000 a year entailed upon him, and as much more in his father’s power to cut off. Beginning with romances of ghosts and murder, and with poetry at Eton, he passed, at Oxford, into metaphysics ; printed

* A part of Christ Church, so called, where Mr. Wynn’s rooms were situated.

half a dozen pages, which he entitled 'The Necessity of Atheism ;' sent one anonymously to Coplestone, in expectation, I suppose, of converting him ; was expelled in consequence ; married a girl of seventeen, after being turned out of doors by his father ; and here they both are, in lodgings, living upon £200 a year, which her father allows them. He is come to the fittest physician in the world. At present he has got to the Pantheistic stage of philosophy, and, in the course of a week, I expect he will be a Berkeleyan, for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley. It has surprised him a good deal to meet, for the first time in his life, with a man who perfectly understands him, and does him full justice. I tell him that all the difference between us is that he is nineteen and I am thirty-seven, and I dare say it will not be long before I shall succeed in convincing him that he may be a true philosopher, and do a great deal of good with £6000 a year, the thought of which troubles him a great deal more at present than ever the want of a sixpence (for I have known such a want) did me. . . . God help us ! the world wants mending, though he did not set about it exactly in the right way." p. 280.

It remains only to add Southey's own picture of his family and home, as they appeared to him on his return from his Pilgrimage to Waterloo, whither he had been accompanied by an invalid daughter. The verses have been often copied before ; but we cannot withstand the temptation to insert them here, though with some omissions.

- " O joyful hour, when to our longing home
 The long-expected wheels at length draw nigh !
 When the first sound went forth, ' They come, they come !'
 And hope's impatience quicken'd every eye !
 Never had man whom heaven would heap with bliss
 More glad return, more happy hour than this.
- " Aloft on yonder bench, with arms disspread,
 My boy stood, shouting there his father's name,
 Waving his hat around his happy head ;
 And there, a younger group, his sisters came :
 Smiling they stood with looks of pleased surprise,
 While tears of joy were seen in elder eyes.
- " Soon all and each came crowding round to share
 The cordial greeting, the beloved sight ;
 What welcomings of hand and lip were there !
 And when those overflowings of delight
 Subsided to a sense of quiet bliss,
 Life hath no purer, deeper happiness.

- “ The young companion of our weary way
Found here the end desired of all her ills ;
She who in sickness pining many a day
Hunger'd and thirsted for her native hills,
Forgetful now of sufferings past and pain,
Rejoiced to see her own dear home again.
- “ Recover'd now, the homesick mountaineer
Sat by the playmate of her infancy,
The twin-like comrade — render'd doubly dear
For that long absence : full of life was she,
With voluble discourse and eager mien
Telling of all the wonders she had seen.
- “ Here silently between her parents stood
My dark-eyed Bertha, timid as a dove ;
And gently oft from time to time she woo'd
Pressure of hand, or word, or look of love.
With impulse shy of bashful tenderness,
Soliciting again the wish'd caress.
- “ The younger twain in wonder lost were they,
My gentle Kate and my sweet Isabel :
Long of our promised coming, day by day
It had been their delight to hear and tell ;
And now, when that long-promised hour was come,
Surprise and wakening memory held them dumb.
- “ Soon they grew blithe as they were wont to be ;
Her old endearments each began to seek :
And Isabel drew near to climb my knee,
And pat with fondling hand her father's cheek,
With voice, and touch, and look reviving thus
The feelings which had slept in long disuse.
- “ But there stood one whose heart could entertain
And comprehend the fulness of the joy ;
The father, teacher, playmate, was again
Come to his only and his studious boy,
And he beheld again that mother's eye,
Which with such ceaseless care had watch'd his infancy
- “ Bring forth the treasures now — a proud display —
For rich as Eastern merchants we return !
Behold the black Beguine, the sister gray,
The friars whose heads with sober motion turn,
The ark well filled with all its numerous hives,
Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japhet, and their wives.

“Scoff ye who will ! but let me, gracious Heaven,
 Preserve this boyish heart till life’s last day !
 For so that inward light by Nature given
 Shall still direct, and cheer me on my way,
 And, brightening as the shades of life descend,
 Shine forth with heavenly radiance at the end.” p. 323.

To complete the picture, we must give also Southey’s poetical account of himself, and his tastes and pursuits, though these verses, too, have been frequently in print. Never did limner present a more faithful outline.

“My days among the dead are past ;
 Around me I behold,
 Where’er these casual eyes are cast,
 The mighty minds of old :
 My never-failing friends are they,
 With whom I converse day by day.

“With them I take delight in weal,
 And seek relief in woe ;
 And while I understand and feel
 How much to them I owe,
 My cheeks have often been bedewed
 With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

“My thoughts are with the dead, with them
 I live in long past years ;
 Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
 Partake their hopes and fears ;
 And from their lessons seek and find
 Instruction with an humble mind.

“My hopes are with the dead ! Anon
 My place with them will be,
 And I with them shall travel on
 Through all futurity ;
 Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
 That will not perish in the dust.” p. 407.

The view which we have thus attempted to piece together, from Southey’s memoirs and correspondence, of the condition, whether in England or in this country, of a man of genius exclusively devoted to literary pursuits, and entirely dependent on them for a livelihood, is a sorrowful and an instructive one. It should operate as a warning to those, especially among the young, who feel the stirrings of literary ambition, and are

therefore disposed to make literature their sole occupation. Be their abilities what they may, or their conduct and purposes as high and pure as they may, and few more favorable examples of either could be adduced than what we have here presented, they will be sure to rue their choice. Public taste or public gratitude affords no sure ground of dependence to him who does not write for the sole purpose of pleasing the public, of flattering its caprices, ministering to its prejudices, or amusing its indolence. He who runs counter to the opinions of the multitude, as every one who desires to improve and instruct his fellow men occasionally must do, cannot expect their approbation or sympathy, and therefore must not place himself in a situation like that of a writer for his bread, in which he must look to them alone for his support. "Fit audience, though few," indeed, a man of ability and lofty aims may always hope to find ; and their applause may cheer him on his way, and bind him with a more resolute purpose to his desk. But as society is now constituted, this is precisely the sort of audience which, though it may flatter his vanity, will never minister to his necessities. And from the unapproving or indignant crowd, he must look for neglect, or vehement censure and detraction. In Southey's case, indeed, the government stepped in at the last moment to rescue his declining old age from penury, and to offer something more than the meaningless laurel for his brow ; and the public voice, weary at last of persecuting him, admitted that both the honor and the assistance were deserved. But the honor was not needed, and he was too high-minded to accept it ; and the assistance came too late for any other purpose than that of smoothing his way to the tomb.